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A Comparison of Operation Iraqi Freedom and The Algerian War

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

23 April 2008

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## **Abstract**

Both the Algerian War and the war in Iraq offer numerous lessons for conducting Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. Shortly after the invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003, the United States (US) found itself embroiled in a bitter insurgency. Since then, the US military skillfully adapted to the rigors of combating the insurgency. As a result, a solid foundation has been laid for the fulfillment of long term strategic success. History is replete with examples of failed attempts at combating insurgencies. For instance, in Algeria from 1954 to 1962, the French did not link their impressive tactical accomplishments on the battlefield to strategic success against a nationalist insurgency. Conversely, the US military in Iraq has demonstrated a more thorough grasp of the operational art. This paper focuses on how the US, in Iraq, more effectively applied certain principles of war to COIN operations at the operational level than the French were able to in Algeria. Specifically, the paper compares the principles of security, restraint, perseverance and finally legitimacy. Examples are given, drawn from numerous sources on both case studies, which paint a detailed picture of how both sides either successfully or unsuccessfully applied those principles at the operational level.

## **Introduction**

The Algerian War provides a great backdrop for current operations that are being conducted in Iraq. The United States (US) in Iraq and French in Algeria used innovative tactics to combat determined foes. The following pages will provide a comparison of how the French and the US were able to apply principles of the war to their perspective “wicked problem.” The specific principles that will be focused on are security, which was one of the historically accepted nine principles along with three other more contemporary principles that are listed in Joint Publication 3-0: restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy.<sup>1</sup>

## **Background**

During Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations the successful combatant is able to establish security, maintain restraint and perseverance in order to realize legitimacy from external actors. A force that is seen as legitimate is able to focus on the center of gravity, the civilian population. Therefore, the focus of effort of any COIN operation should be to foster development of a government that is seen as legitimate by the civilian population.<sup>2</sup> The US has more effectively applied the principles of war, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy to combating insurgents in Iraq than the French military did against Algerian insurgent elements in the French Algerian war. Consequently, US tactical and operational level achievements are better translating into strategic aims.

The roots of the Algerian insurgency stemmed from the long history of semi colonial rule by the French government and their proxies in French Algeria. From 1830 to 1954, France ruled, for the most part, unchallenged over Algeria. In 1830, a French

expeditionary force was able to land unopposed and subsequently seize the capital city of Algiers. Thus began more than a century of French rule lasting until 1962. Because of the differences in cultures, as well as religion and language<sup>3</sup>, almost from the start, resistance to French rule permeated Algerian Society. Consequently, the French government encouraged French and other European citizens to settle in Algeria. These transplanted Europeans were referred to by the slang term  *pied nior*.<sup>4</sup> The intent of the French government was for the settlers to provide a civilizing effect on the native inhabitants of the country so Algeria could become a vital part of the French empire. However, the transplanted European's subsequently exploited the situation in Algeria by creating a semi-feudal society in which they enjoyed numerous socio-political advantages over the indigenous population.<sup>5</sup> The French policies caused a feeling of disenfranchisement by the ingenious population of Algeria. The minority ethnic population in Algeria enjoyed greater political power. According to Horne, “ in 1922 there were 300 European administrators for the *communes mixtes* for three million Muslims governed by them, by 1954 the ratio had shifted to 257 for four and a half million.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1954, the French were sitting on a highly volatile powder keg in Algeria. On one hand, the Muslim indigenous population was unhappy with the disproportionate advantage that the transplanted European population enjoyed. The transplanted Europeans, on the other hand, wanted to remain linked to France. French authorities' attempt at pacifying the two mutually exclusive populations was akin to burning a candle at both ends. The political acumen of transplanted Europeans was evident by events throughout the history of French involvement in Algeria. Attempts were made in 1868,

1919 and again in 1944 to pass reform-focused laws which would have dealt with the inequities between transplanted Europeans and the indigenous population. During each occasion,  *pied nior*  pressure-groups were able to politically out maneuver the French metropolitan government ensuring reform minded legislation did not become law.”<sup>7</sup>

The inability of the French to change the disparity in the power base in Algeria led directly to the war. The nationalist movement manifested itself in the form of an insurgency which commenced on All Saints Day, 1 November 1954. The main orchestrator of the insurgency was an organization called the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN).<sup>8</sup> Throughout the eight year war that followed, the FLN, against great odds, skillfully combined age old insurgent tactics with an uncanny ability to strategically communicate their plight on the world stage in order to gain independence from France.

In contrast to the French experience, in 2003 a US led coalition rolled across the Iraqi Kuwaiti border with the mission of toppling the Baathist regime led by Saddam Hussein. In spite of an immensely successful invasion in which conventional Iraqi military forces were easily defeated, the seeds were planted early on for the present day insurgency. For example, the methods the Iraqi armed forces utilized to fight the initial ground campaign combined with numerous bad assumptions made by the US before commencing operations greatly contributed to the insurgency.

During phase III operations<sup>9</sup>, paramilitary units proved to be the biggest threat that the Iraqi forces were able to present against the overwhelming firepower of coalition forces. In 1995, Saddam's son Uday founded a paramilitary organization known as the Saddam Fedayeen which, translated from Arabic to English, means Men of Sacrifice.<sup>10</sup> The Saddam Fedayeen were dispersed along with pre-positioned weapons and ordnance

caches throughout Iraq along the axis of advance of the coalition forces. During the invasion they focused attacks on high value, low risk targets such as Combat Service Support (CSS) units supporting the rapid advance of combat forces during the drive from Kuwait northward towards Baghdad. The Iraqi tactics had the desired effect of increasing the friction of continuing the axis of advance with minimal rear area security.<sup>11</sup> Later during Security Stability Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) the techniques used by the paramilitary units during the invasion were utilized by insurgents as they attempted to undermine coalition forces in Iraq.

The US strategy for post-phase III operations depended on numerous bad assumptions such as the ability of the Iraqi police and armed forces to maintain order led to not enough boots on the ground to support SSTR operations. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) also made several bad decisions. Debaathification, the complete divestiture of the Iraqi armed forces, and a methodical approach to a new government all helped fuel the insurgency.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, throughout 2003 and 2004 the insurgency was able to gain steam in Iraq. However, the US military has been able to adapt and is now focusing tactical accomplishments through the operational art on strategic success.

## **Security**

The ability of the COIN force to provide security for the civilian population is on the one hand instrumental to long term success and on the other extremely difficult to attain. Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 clarifies that, “[t]he purpose of security is to never permit the enemy to acquire unexpected advantage.”<sup>13</sup> The Joint Publication goes on to describe aspects of security that have a direct application in COIN operations keeping in

mind that friendly forces are both military forces and the ultra important civilian population. This is evident in the statement, “[s]ecurity enhances freedom of action by reducing friendly vulnerability to hostile acts, influence, hostile acts, or surprise.”<sup>14</sup> According to Maslow’s hierarchy, security is one of the most basic of needs. Therefore, creating a secure environment is a necessary step early on in creating the foundations of a successful COIN operation. Providing security during COIN operations is inherently complicated. However, security operations, by their nature, are the aspect of COIN operations that a conventional military force is most prepared to do.

Both the US in Iraq and the French in Algeria were initially unsuccessful at providing security for the populace. In both cases the insurgents were able to take advantage of unabated movement across unsecured porous borders to external safe havens. The insurgents were not isolated from the population. According to a Rand Corporation study, “...with few exceptions (perhaps only in Cuba), successful insurgencies have been able to obtain aid and comfort from outside sources. Conversely, successful COIN operations appeared easier in isolated battlefields...”<sup>15</sup> Consequently, in order to gain the initiative and achieve ultimate success, both US and the French would have to effectively isolate the civilian population from the insurgents.

The French approach to isolating the FLN from the indigenous Algerian population had several positive aspects. They utilized their comparative advantage in technology to create the infamous Morice Line. The Morice Line was an imposing barrier that extended from the Mediterranean Sea south along the Algerian/Tunisian and the Algerian/Moroccan borders for 200 miles. The barrier terminated in the Sahara desert where crossing the border was not practicable because of a lack of cover and concealment

and no passable road networks. The formidable barrier was built around an eight foot high, 50,000 volt electric fence that was covered by a force of over 80,000 personnel. The fence also was sandwiched between a fifty yard belt of antipersonnel mines. Not forgetting the dictum that an obstacle is worthless unless it is covered by fire, sensors were placed throughout that could precisely detect attempts at breaching the wire. Upon detection mobile troops would rapidly respond via helicopters or ground transportation to the suspected breach site. Furthermore, the reaction forces were supported with indirect fire support from automatically sited 105mm howitzers.<sup>16</sup>

The barrier effectively isolated the FLN forces operating in Algeria from outside forces which were primarily located in Tunisia and to a lesser extent in Morocco. From the spring of 1958 onward the borders with both Tunisia and Morocco were effectively closed off to all external support.<sup>17</sup> For the remainder of the war FLN forces were not able to resupply or reinforce insurgent elements located in the interior of Algeria. Consequently, the FLN was not able to engage the population as effectively as they were able to earlier in the war. The Morice line was so effective that the US considered building a similar barrier on the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in Vietnam.<sup>18</sup>

Iraq, like Algeria, has porous borders with countries that are sympathetic to any force that is able to successfully engage US forces. To the east, Iraq shares a long border with Iran. The demographic of both Iran and southeastern Iraq is predominately Shia Muslim. At border crossing sites such as Basrah and Al Kut, insurgent forces have been known to funnel across the border. The Al Anbar province of Iraq which extends west from Baghdad to the borders with the Sunni countries Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia is demographically Sunni Muslims. The Sunni Muslims in Al Anbar, during Saddam

Hussein's reign, were politically aligned with the Baath party which was and still is the ruling party in Syria. Consequently, US forces have been engaged on one hand with Shia militias in Baghdad and eastern Iraq and on the other Sunni insurgents backed up by Sunni dominated Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) elements in AL Anbar province, specifically the Sunni triangle.

Beginning in 2005, the US utilized a risky and novel concept to shore up the porous borders in Al Anbar province, where the preponderance of the most dangerous portion of the insurgency was taking place. The technique consisted of clearing operations along the Iraqi/Syrian border in the vicinity of the border village, Al Qaim. The clearing operations were designed to remove the AQI presence that was a threat to the security of the local populace. Once the villages and towns were cleared, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) were placed in blocking positions along the border in order to block the border from the steady flow of miscreants that had used this route, which stretches from the Syrian border southeast along the Euphrates River to Baghdad, as an ingress into Iraq.<sup>19</sup> Figure 1 contains valuable demographic data along with cartographic data that amplifies the aforementioned paragraph.

The US strategy of depending on the capabilities of the ISF, whose performance early on in the war was suspect to say the least, can be described as high risk/high payoff. There are detractors to this strategy. Former Army General Barry McCaffery was critical in his After Action Report (AAR) after a trip to Kuwait and Iraq that stated he was pleased that Iraqi Security Forces were finally capable of taking on an independent and successful role in the war. However, they still lacked credibility as a COIN force.<sup>20</sup> In spite of the risk of relying on ISF, this plan had the potential of paying huge dividends to

the COIN effort in the long run. First, US forces were freed up to conduct other operations in the theater. Second, an Iraqi face was put on the operation. The ISF was able to remain in the area for the long term which allowed the civilian population in the area to see an Iraqi element providing security for the area. Consequently, the Iraqi government enjoyed some amount of legitimacy. The ISF are more proficient at distinguishing between insurgents moving back and forth across the border and ordinary criminals who historically smuggled goods back and forth across the border.<sup>21</sup>

The US built upon early successes by effectively engaging the once hostile population in Al Anbar province. The chief element behind the insurgency in Iraq, AQI, made critical mistakes in the 2005-2007 timeframe which translated into a strategic opportunity for US forces. AQI alienated the local population so badly that the US was able to conduct an out reach program with a population that had been one of the most hostile towards US forces. Once again, with an eye on long term success, the US directly supported the Sunni efforts to provide local security in their communities. This risky strategy included arming and paying the once wayward group.<sup>22</sup> This program paid off with huge dividends as the violence dropped off dramatically throughout Al Anbar province. In testimony to congress in 2007, General Petraeus described the “Al Anbar awakening” as a model of what happens when local leaders and citizens decide to oppose extremist ideology.<sup>23</sup> This initiative combined with earlier efforts in Al Anbar effectively isolated the insurgents from the civilian population with the added benefit of long term staying power because ISF and local Iraqi’s were participating.

Both the French and US techniques were highly successful at the tactical level. However, the US tactic of isolating the civilian populace from the insurgents has greater

long term prospects at strategic success. Incorporating an Iraqi face (Indigenous) aspect of trying to isolate the population proved to be a something that really differentiated the US and French techniques. The Morice Line was manned by French personnel with no prospects of being replaced by non-existent indigenous Algerian forces. The US accepted short term risk by depending on ISF troops to backfill blocking positions and incorporating locals into the security plan in order to achieve operational and strategic success. The objective is for the Iraqi's to secure their own borders for the long term.

### **Restraint**

When conducting COIN operations, the ability of a military force to not fall into the trap of being provoked by insurgent activities into heavy handed reprisals is of paramount importance. (JP) 3-0 describes restraint as, “[e]xcessive force antagonizes those parties involved, thereby damaging the legitimacy of the organization that uses it while potentially enhancing the legitimacy of the opposing party.”<sup>24</sup> The US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency manual alludes to the conundrum by stating, “[t]he contest of internal war is not “fair”; many of the “rules” favor insurgents. That is why insurgency has been a common approach used by the weak against the strong.”<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the USMC Small Wars Manual states that irregular troops often disregard the rules of land warfare and commanders must be prepared to effectively combat those practices.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, a great deal of discipline is required to effectively conduct COIN operations against a determined insurgency.

Restraint was a constant challenge for the French forces during the Algerian War. The FLN, acting the part of the weaker force, did not play by the rules. The FLN believed that if they carried out blind terrorist acts it would inexorably provoke the forces

of law and order (French) to perform equally blind repressions against the populace which would have the effect of alienating the uncommitted. The end result was a rapid gravitation of the civilian population, *pie d nior* indigenous Muslims, into extreme camps which were subsequently incapable of any dialogue or compromise.<sup>27</sup> From the beginning of the war, FLN attacks routinely extracted extreme measures from the French forces. French General Paul Assaresses who participated in the war described his rather short sited modus operandi for conducting operations by stating, “I don’t attempt to justify my actions, but only to explain that once an enemy who is using terror to compel an indifferent population to join its ranks and provoke a repression that will outrage international public opinion, it becomes impossible for that army to avoid using extreme measures.”<sup>28</sup> Consequently, the Algerian war was shaped in large part by tit for tat excesses that eventually eroded public support for the war among the indigenous populace, throughout the international community, and in Metropolitan France.

One of the defining moments in the Algerian war and a prime example of the aforementioned French/FLN policies was the brutal terrorist act known as the Phillippeville massacre. On 20 August 1955 Algerian revolutionaries without warning tortured and killed 123 French colonials. During the massacre, the FLN along with local Muslims brutally butchered almost an entire *pie d nior* community provoking a massive and bloody retaliation by the French in which over a thousand Muslims were indiscriminately killed. The incident had the strategic effect that the FLN desired. On the French side it led to a hardening of wills against the indigenous population. For example, the reform minded governor-general of Algeria Jacques Soustelle, who had been a champion of political concessions for the Algerians, became more of a hard liner.

He subsequently dropped his support of reforms in lieu of a militarily focused aggressive suppression of insurgents. For the military and transplanted Europeans, the event served to demonize the indigenous population. The effect on the indigenous civilian population was polarizing.<sup>29</sup> The French retaliation effectively eliminated the majority of moderates who were still on the fence as far as the insurgency was concerned. Also, this event was the start of erosion of popular support by influential French citizens in metropolitan France.

In 1957 the French were able to achieve one of their most impressive tactical victories of the war as French paratroopers (paras) completely eradicated the entire FLN network during the Battle of Algiers. However, the French forces further eroded their strategic position during the battle as widespread claims of torture were alleged by members of the media covering the battle. As detailed in the famous movie, *The Battle of Algiers*, the situation in Algiers rapidly deteriorated during the fall of 1956 and spring of 1957. Numerous terrorist acts were carried out by FLN members to include the bombing of a *pied nior* café, milkbar, and the Algiers Air France terminal. The attacks were conducted by female FLN members who disguised themselves as transplanted European teenagers in order to get through police checkpoints between the casbah and the *pied nior* quarter.<sup>30</sup> With an eye towards United Nations (UN) scheduled meetings, the FLN arranged for strikes to follow the bombings. The purpose of the strikes was to gain international recognition for the legitimacy of the FLN and the nationalist's movement in Algeria from the international community.<sup>31</sup>

Under the auspice of breaking the strike and restoring order after the bombings, the French brought a Division of French paras to augment authorities in Algiers. During

the ensuing battle, the paras routinely used torture in order to ascertain the location and makeup of the FLN forces in Algiers. This very successful method allowed the paras to obtain actionable intelligence to in order to round up and either detain or kill the majority of the FLN network in Algiers. Tactically, this was a huge defeat for the FLN. However, at the strategic level, the FLN was able to achieve long term aims by getting their story out to the international community. Also, support from the French population in Metropolitan France was further eroded.<sup>32</sup>

US forces are currently dealing with some of the same types of tactics used by the insurgents in Iraq. Getting the more powerful force to retaliate in a way that is perceived as heavy handed is a tried and true method and still a favorite tactic among insurgents. Unfortunately for the US, some of the major incidents that have shaped the public perception of the war in Iraq revolve around the perceived mistreatment of detained individuals. This issue is often a central part in the ongoing hot debate in the media. Public opinion in the US does not support the use of torture. Furthermore, the American public's perception of what constitutes torture is very liberal. The Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal in 2004 highlighted the need to ensure discipline was adhered to when conducting detainee operations. The bottom line is the Abu Ghraib scandal was a serious setback to the US and coalition forces strategic communications campaign. Consequently, the legitimacy of the mission of US forces in Iraq was eroded by these incidents.

There have also been other incidents of wrong doing on the battlefield such as the Haditha Dam incident in which unarmed civilians allegedly were unjustly killed. Recent US doctrine has addressed these types of issues. According to the US Army/Marine

Corps Counterinsurgency manual forces carrying out COIN operations must, "...stick to the truth and make sure words are backed up by deeds..."<sup>33</sup> While conducting COIN operations in Iraq, US forces are read in to Rules of Engagement (ROE) that are in accordance with the laws of war.<sup>34</sup> The US has made extensive efforts to live up to the highest standards. If an instance occurs that has the potential of turning out to be a wrongful act, commanders are quick to get to the bottom of the situation by conducting inquiries or investigations. This has led to legal action in some of the cases where warranted.<sup>35</sup> The importance of these policies may not equate to immediate strategic communications successes. However, they do have a more enduring influence on how operations are conducted which ultimately equates to positive strategic effects.

### **Perseverance**

An aspect of insurgencies that definitely favor the insurgent is their protracted nature. In order to win, the insurgent may only have to outlast the public will supporting his adversary. The US military addresses this in (JP) 3-0 which states, "[t]he purpose of perseverance is to ensure the commitment necessary to attain the national strategic end state."<sup>36</sup> This is due in large part to the fact that COIN operations are resource intensive. It is also difficult to measure if the force conducting COIN operations is succeeding. The Algerian war lasted for eight years. In the end popular support from the citizens of France had all but vanished. The US has been conducting SSTR operations in Iraq since phase III operations ceased in the late spring of 2003 and has been engaged in COIN operations since 2004. How does a democratic government continue to support a long and drawn out war that is increasingly unpopular? The country which conducts COIN operations must minimize mistakes that might undermine the support of the civilian

population which is the center of gravity in this type of war. Both the US and the French made mistakes early during their perspective war. However, the US has more effectively learned from mistakes and redesigned operations with an eye towards strategic success.

In spite of efforts to the contrary, the French were unable to cultivate popular support from the indigenous population throughout Algeria. The use of indigenous French forces during the Challe offensive and the token political reforms that occurred throughout the war were just too little too late to change public sentiment for the war.<sup>37</sup> The US in Iraq has been able to capitalize on strategic changes that were made in midstream, once talented commanders were able to assess the situation and focus tactical actions on strategic success. Commanders in Iraq requested additional forces for operations in Iraq in 2007 in what would be called “the surge.” The additional forces were utilized in conjunction with other aforementioned programs to wrestle the initiative away from AQI and other insurgents. The operations allowed the Iraqi government breathing space in order to start the slow road towards governing the country.<sup>38</sup>

### **Legitimacy**

Legitimacy with the civilian population both in the country where the insurgency is being conducted and in the home country is a central focus. In fact, the other three aforesaid principles are building blocks for the final aim of attaining legitimacy. For instance in JP 3-0, legitimacy is described as being, “...based on the legality, morality, and rightness, of the actions undertaken. Legitimacy is frequently a decisive element. Interested audiences may include the foreign nations, civil populations in the operational area, and the participating forces.”<sup>39</sup> The French and the US both found it challenging to establish and maintain a modicum of legitimacy in their perspective COIN campaigns.

The French strategy during the Algerian war was to maintain the status quo, an Algeria that was a part of France. However, the French were not willing to treat the Algerians as equals to either the transplanted European population in Algeria or the population of metropolitan France. This put the French military in Algeria in a conundrum. Achieving legitimacy on an equal footing to the nationalist's ambitions of the insurgency was a tough task.

A method that the French utilized to increase legitimacy in the eyes of the indigenous civilian population in Algeria for the war was to establish Harki units. Harkis units were made up of Algerians that were loyal to France. However, the wide use of these units only came late in the war, from 1957 to 1959. During that period, Harki units increased from 18 to 385 with total end strength of 60,000. The performance of the Harkis during the Challe offensive was a force multiplier as the Harkis were able to root out FLN insurgents in support of French military operations.<sup>40</sup> Also, numerous French intellectuals championed civic reforms. However, transplanted Europeans continuously remained a barrier to change.

Ultimately, the French were not able to provide the indigenous population with any incentive to support maintaining the status quo. The French tactical military accomplishments could not overcome the view held by the indigenous Muslim population. For example, in his journal in 1955, Mouloud Feraoun wrote, “[h]ow does a European define a native? A common laborer, a maid. A bizarre creature with ridiculous customs, peculiar dress, and an impossible language. A more or less dirty, tattered, and unpleasant character.”<sup>41</sup> The perception that was evident in 1955, barely one year into the war, only worsened as the war continued into the early 1960s. The fact that there was

little chance for upward advancement in the Algerian system while it was a part of France further eroded any popular support that the counterinsurgency might have enjoyed.

In spite of initial setbacks, the US forces have achieved military success in Iraq much more conducive to political development. The US strategy, which was bolstered by free elections and by “the surge,” has been to engage the population and assist the Iraqi’s in creating a functioning democratic society. This was a huge departure from the way that Iraq functioned under the Saddam Hussein regime and its forbearers. From the support of democratic elections to the awakening in Al Anbar province to the surge, US and coalition forces have set the conditions for future success. The US led coalition supported two separate national level elections in 2005.<sup>42</sup> Both of the elections were successfully conducted and voter turnout was very high in each. During those elections, a democratically elected legislature along with a prime minister was elected.

Since then, in spite of being under scrutiny from the outside world, the Iraqi government has been functioning to varying degrees of success. Recently, the Iraqi central government embarked on a highly risky strategy of engaging Shia militants who wield huge power in Shia dominated areas of Iraq. The Shia also enjoy huge backing inside the fledgling government. However, despite the risks of alienating the Shia, the strategy may lead to long term success. According to an Associated Press article, “Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's faltering crackdown on Shiite militants has won the backing of Sunni Arab and Kurdish parties that fear both the powerful sectarian militias and the effects of failure on Iraq's fragile government.”<sup>43</sup> The consequences of this gesture from the Kurd and the Sunni leaders may point to the way to long term strategic success in Iraq as it represents a coming together of the three major ethnic groups that makeup the

country, Shia, Sunni, and Kurd. Political discord between the groups could increase the legitimacy of the central government.

## **Conclusion**

Both the United States and France found themselves embroiled in unforeseen insurgencies where the odds of success were not very good. The French military was able to achieve huge battlefield successes during the Algerian war. French forces totally outclassed the FLN at the tactical level throughout the entire war. The Mordida line, efforts of the French Paratroopers during the Battle For Algiers, and the Challe Offensive were hugely successful on the tactical level. However, the French were not able to link the aforementioned tactical successes into strategic success. The French were never able to effectively engage the center of gravity, the civilian population.

The US has also achieved tactical success on the battlefield in Iraq. Like the French, the US enjoys an almost insurmountable comparative advantage in conducting conventional warfare. How does the comparative advantage translate into strategic success in a COIN operation? The answer lies in how effectively the US is able to engage the civilian population. In Iraq, the focus has been on empowering the Iraqis to govern themselves. The awakening in different Iraqi provinces is definitely a sign that there is a grass roots movement by Iraqis of buy-in for the coalition strategy in Iraq. The surge has supported this movement by providing a secure environment where the basic institutions in Iraqi society can work. Consequently, I would argue that the US has been more successful in focusing operations on the basic center of gravity in an insurgency and in the long run will be more successful than the French were in Algeria.

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<sup>1</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Operations, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 17 September 2006), II-I.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Army/Marine Corps, Counterinsurgency Field Manual, Field Manual (FM) 3-24/ Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-33.5 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 15 December 2006), 37.

<sup>3</sup> Horne, Alistair, *A Savage War Of Peace* (New York, NY: New York Review of Books, 1977) 23-59. Horne's book describes the differences between the different Arab populations. It also describes the rift between the indigenous Muslim population that spoke Arabic and the European transplants/French authorities that spoke French. He also discusses how the cultures did not readily conform to each other's cultural norms. One example that he gives is that in Muslim culture women are more reclusive to persons outside their family. Consequently, Muslim and *pie d nior* families were not able to get together with each other socially. Social bonds between the groups were tenuous at best.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 30. Horne describes the origins of the term *pie d nior* to mean black feet which could either be attributed to the black shoes of the French military or a patronizing metropolitan French view that the transplanted Europeans had feet burned black by the desert. Nonetheless the term stuck.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 30-54.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 34.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid 36.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid 94-95.

<sup>9</sup> JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, IV-25 to IV-29. JP 3-0 describes the purpose of phasing operations as a way to arrange operations in a way that links lines of operations to objectives. Phase III operations is the "dominate" phase in which the focus of the operation usually occurs.

<sup>10</sup> Global Security.Org, "Saddam's Martyrs ['Men of Sacrifice'] Fedayeen Saddam," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/iraq/fedayeen.htm> (accessed 27 March 2008).

<sup>11</sup> I was the Commanding Officer of a Transportation Support Company that was engaged on numerous occasions by Saddam Fedayeen units. Those units definitely caused problems to the movement of sustainment throughout southern Iraq along the finite supply routes. An immense amount of detailed information about the invasion can be obtained in the book: General Bernard Trainor and Michael R. Gordon, *Cobra II* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> General Bernard Trainor and Michael R. Gordon, *Cobra II* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2006) 24-163. Gordon and Trainor go into detail about the planning and execution of the invasion portion of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

<sup>13</sup> JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, A-2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid p A-2.

<sup>15</sup> Austin Long, *On Other War, Lessons from five decades of RAND counterinsurgency research*, RAND Report (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006), 49.

<sup>16</sup> Horne, *A Savage War Of Peace*, 264.

<sup>17</sup> David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958*, RAND Report R-SD-79-ARPA (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1963), 180.

<sup>18</sup> Austin Long, *On Other War, Lessons from five decades of RAND counterinsurgency research*, 50.

<sup>19</sup> I deployed to Iraq in the fall of 2005 as a Senior Watch Officer for 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Logistics Group which was the Combat Service Support Element for Multi National Forces West (MNF-W). Consequently, I was able to participate in the planning and execution for the support of Operation IRON FIST which along with other operations was conducted in the area around Al Qaim Iraq with the backfill of ISF forces into prepared blocking positions in the vicinity of border crossing towns along the border of Iraq/Syria. Prior to this operation, US forces had routinely swept areas, subsequently withdrawing from those locations in order to conduct operations in other hot spots. As ISF forces became available, their ability to backfill these positions amplified the offensive striking power of MNF-W and directly contributed to subsequent strategic accomplishments.

<sup>20</sup> General Barry R McCaffrey USA (Ret). General Barry R McCaffrey USA (Ret) VISIT IRAQ AND KUWAIT 5-11 DECEMBER 2007, After Action Report, US Military Academy, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Observations from my second tour in Iraq in MNF-W.

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- <sup>22</sup> Alyssa J. Rubin, and John F. Burns, "U.S. forms an uneasy alliance with Sunnis; Military reaches out to Iraqis disillusioned with Qaeda's tactics." *The International Herald Tribune*, 12 June 2007, <http://www.lexisnexis.com/> (accessed 24 Feb 2008).
- <sup>23</sup> U.S. Senate, Armed Services Committee, Commander, Multi-National Force-Iraq, *Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq*, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 2007. [http://www.stratfor.com/report\\_congress\\_situation\\_iraq](http://www.stratfor.com/report_congress_situation_iraq) (accessed 26 Feb 2008).
- <sup>24</sup> JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, A-3.
- <sup>25</sup> FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 4.
- <sup>26</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, (SWM) (Washington, DC: Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 1940) 1-8.
- <sup>27</sup> Horne, *A Savage War Of Peace*, 118.
- <sup>28</sup> General Paul Aussareesses, *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Algeria 1955-1957* (New York, NY: Enigma Books, 2004), 129.
- <sup>29</sup> Chalmers Johnson, "Responding to Terrorism Without Committing Terrorism," *George Mason University's History News Network*, 1 October 2001, <http://historynewsnetwork.org/articles/article.html?id=317> (accessed 14 March 2008). Further detail on the massacre can be found in the book: Horne, *A Savage War Of Peace*, 118-123.
- <sup>30</sup> *The Battle of Algiers*, DVD, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo (USA: The Criterion Collection DVD, 2004). This movie, which covers the events leading to, during and after the battle shows the different living areas, i.e., quarter for the  *pied niors* and casbah for the indigenous population.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 5. The manual also dedicates an entire chapter to Leadership and Ethics for Counterinsurgency operations. The chapter describes in detail proper methods for interacting in this extremely tough environment.
- <sup>34</sup> While deploying to Iraq in support of OIF, I along with all other arrivals was given an extensive ROE brief in Kuwait by Multinational Forces-Iraq (MNF-I) and at the unit level when I arrived at my unit location in Iraq. It is my understanding that all personnel go through a very similar ROE indoctrination.
- <sup>35</sup> Josh White and Thomas Ricks, "Investigators of Haditha Shootings look to exhume Bodies." *Washington Post*, 2 June 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/01/AR2006060100343.html> (accessed 21 April 2008). This is just one example of many articles covering the legal action taken by the US military on suspected crimes perpetrated in Iraq.
- <sup>36</sup> JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, A-4.
- <sup>37</sup> Horne, *A Savage War Of Peace*, 353-445.
- <sup>38</sup> Fredrick W. Kagan and Kimberly Kagan, "The Patton of Counterinsurgency." *The Weekly Standard*, 10 March 2008, [http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer\\_preview.asp?idArticle=14](http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=14) (accessed 11 March 2008).
- <sup>39</sup> JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, A-4.
- <sup>40</sup> Horne, *A Savage War Of Peace*, 254-256.
- <sup>41</sup> Mouloud Feraoun, *Journal 1955-1962: Reflections on the Algerian War*. ed. James D. Le Sueur. trans. Mary Ellen Wolf and Claude Fouillade (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 42.
- <sup>42</sup> As the Senior Watch Officer of 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Logistics Group (MLG), I coordinated the execution of different aspects of the elections in Iraq. My duties included tracking and reporting the progress of the establishment of voting stations throughout Al Anbar province. I was also involved in tracking the ballots to the various sites throughout Al Anbar province along with the tracking of voters throughout the election period.
- <sup>43</sup> Hamza Hendawa, "Analysis: Iraqi PM wins rare support." *Associated Press*, 5 April 2008. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89412416> (accessed 5 April 2008).
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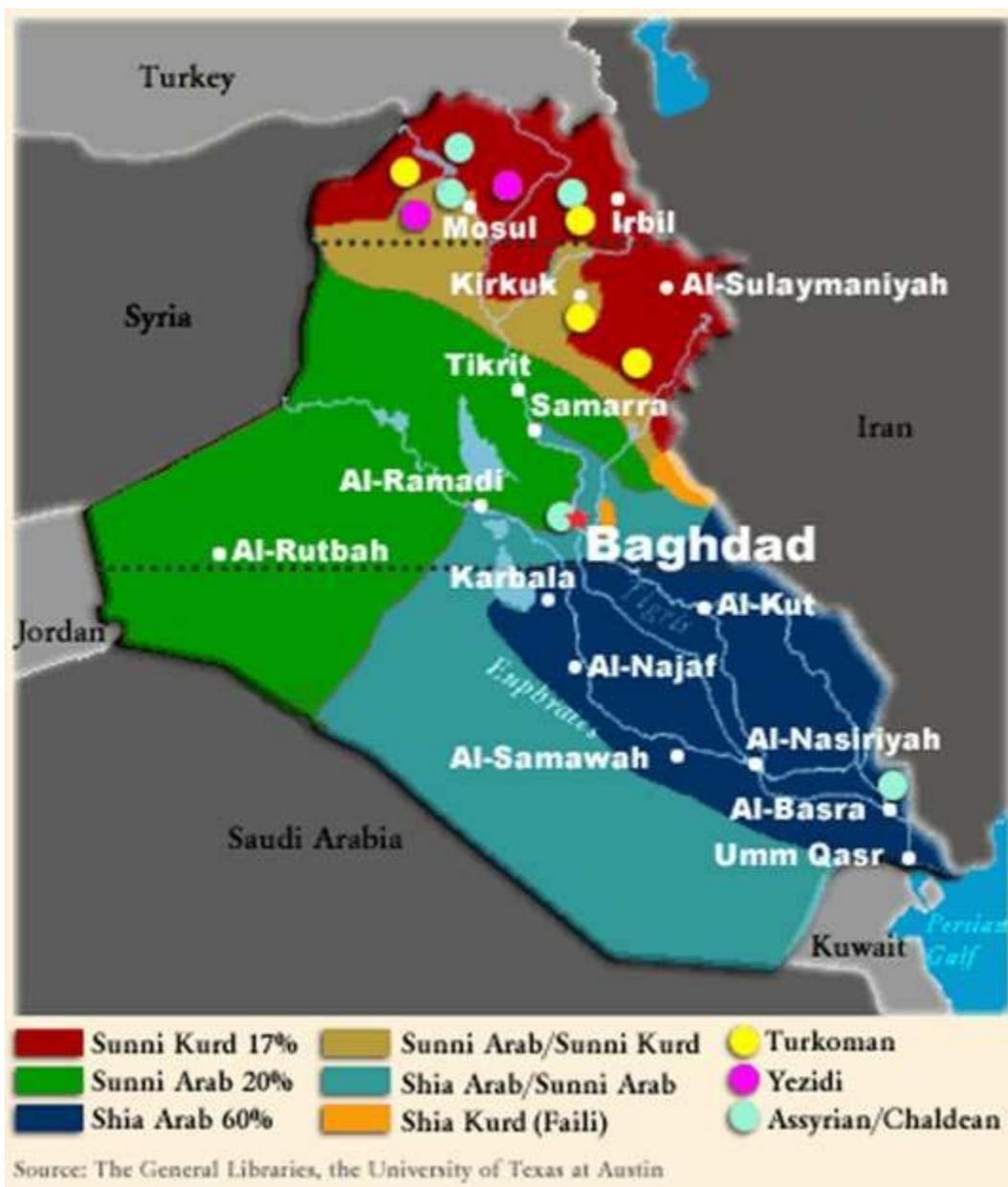


Figure 1